Healthy Forests Report

May 04, 2005

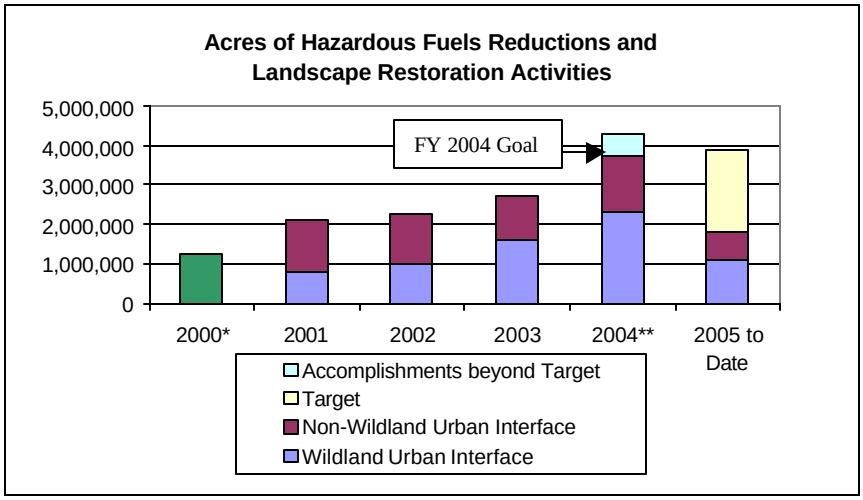
The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the USDA Forest Service are committed to the implementation of the National Fire Plan (NFP) and Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI). The NFP and HFI care for our forests and rangelands, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to communities, help save the lives of firefighters and citizens, and protect critical natural resources.

HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION & LANDSCAPE RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

Hazardous levels of fuels in our forests and grasslands are the most significant risk factor of catastrophic wildland fires. Land managers are addressing this risk by reducing fuel build-ups with two approaches:

1. Hazardous Fuels Reductions are designed to reduce fuels around homes, communities and resources to slow or stop wildland fires from threatening these high-value areas.
2. Landscape Restoration Activities are designed with multiple benefits in mind. The primary objective is to restore the landscape to improve a compromised resource such as wildlife habitat, watershed health, etc. A reduction in hazardous fuel levels is a secondary benefit of the restoration activities.

Under the direction of the NFP, and using the tools and authorities created by HFI and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), the Federal land management agencies have reduced the threat of catastrophic wildland fire on over 13 million acres of federal lands since 2000.



* FY 2000 is used as a baseline for reporting, as the NFP was implemented in FY 2001. Treatment location was not included in reporting prior to FY 2001.

** Acres treated under landscape restoration activities were not reported prior to FY 2004.

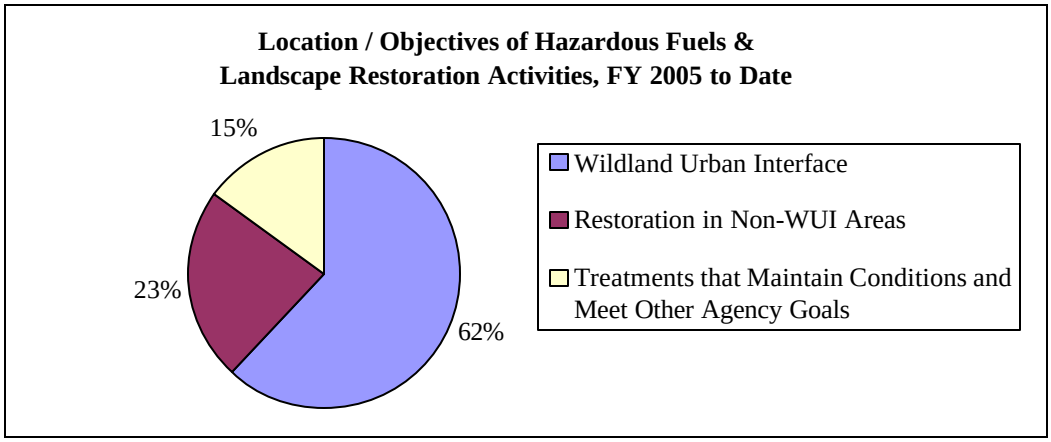
Hazardous Fuels & Landscape Restoration Activities, FY 2005 (as of 4/25/2005)

	Hazardous Fuels Appropriations		Other Appropriations (Landscape Restoration Activities)		
Treatment Type	**Prescribed Fire**	**Mechanical & Other**	**Prescribed Fire**	**Mechanical & Other**	**TOTAL**
Forest Service	938,000	73,000	27,000	59,000	**1,097,000**
DOI	424,000	151,000	30,000	113,000	**718,000**
TOTAL	**1,362,000**	**224,000**	**57,000**	**172,000**	**1,815,000**

Hazardous Fuels and Landscape Restoration Priorities

The Forest Service and the Department of the Interior land management agencies' hazardous fuels reduction and landscape restoration activities are designed to meet one of three objectives:

1. Directly reduce wildfire threats to homes and communities that are adjacent to or within wildlands, in what is known as the wildland urban interface.
2. Prioritize treatments in those forests and grasslands outside of the wildland-urban interface that are at greatest risk of catastrophic wildland fire. Treatments in these areas move towards restoring fire to its historical role (in terms of frequency and severity).
3. The third objective includes two main components: maintenance of previous treatments to ensure resiliency to catastrophic wildland fire and implementation of activities that are in line with the agencies' other long-term management goals, such as wildlife management, watershed protection or timber stand improvement.



HEALTHY FORESTS AUTHORITIES

Implementation of activities under the HFI and HFRA authorities can be summarized as a three-step process:

1. Planning for NEPA Decisions – Activities that will require NEPA Decisions are identified; this generally occurs up to 3 years prior to actual project implementation. The planning is typically broad in scope, and may include multiple treatments; identification of specific project location and size usually has not yet taken place.
2. Analysis and Preparation – Project preparation and design generally occur in the year prior to implementation. Project scope, location and treatment type are refined to a finer level of detail (information on the analysis and preparation of projects is currently not collected in the agencies' national reporting databases).
3. Treatment Planning and Accomplishment – Final planning and implementation occur.

Activities under HFI and HFRA Authorities in FY 2005 (as of 4/25/05)

	# of NEPA Decisions Planned	# of Treatments Planned for FY 2005	Acres Planned for Treatment in FY 2005	Acres Accomplished to date in FY 2005
HFRA	92	118	53,566	11,744
HFI	438	1,627	360,059	97,486
Total	**530**	**1,745**	**413,625**	**109,230**

UTILIZATION OF FOREST BYPRODUCTS

Byproducts removed during hazardous fuels reduction and landscape restoration activities can sometimes be utilized in certain forest products (e.g., timber, engineered lumber, paper and pulp, furniture) and bio-energy and bio-based products (e.g., plastics, ethanol, and diesel).

Acres Treated with Byproducts Utilized (as of 4/25/2005)

	# Acres Mechanically Treated with Byproducts Utilized	**Total # of Acres Treated by Mechanical Means**	**% Acres Mechanically Treated with Byproducts Utilized**
Hazardous Fuels			
DOI	11,777	125,152	9%
Forest Service	15,332	78,172	20%
Landscape Restoration			
Forest Service	58,542	77,803	75%
TOTAL	**68,747**	**262,010**	**26%**

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS AWARDED

Stewardship contracting includes natural resource management practices that promote a closer working relationship with local communities in a broad range of activities that improve land conditions. These projects shift the focus of federal forest and rangeland management towards a desired future resource condition. They are also a means for federal agencies to contribute to the development of sustainable rural communities, restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems, and provide a continuing source of local income and employment.

	Bureau of Land Management		**Forest Service**	
2003	2 contracts	300 acres	50 contracts	14,000 acres
2004	22 contracts	15,000 acres	64 contracts	42,000 acres
2005	0 contracts awarded 70 contracts expected		11 contracts awarded 43 contracts expected	5,000 acres
Total	**149 contracts / agreements for 76,000 acres***			

*Not all projects in table above were authorized under HFRA.

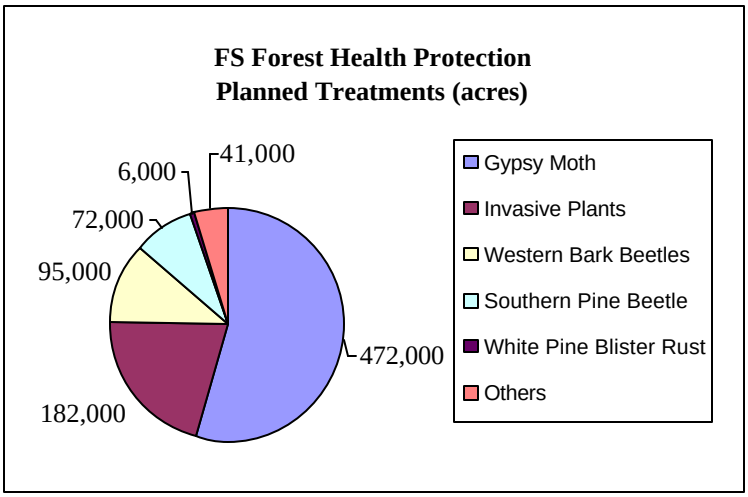
HFRA TITLE IV: APPLIED RESEARCH

The Forest Service's applied research projects, in partnership with several universities and state forestry agencies, aim to conduct and evaluate different land management practices that reduce problems associated with the current outbreaks of insects and diseases and to translate that information for practicing professionals, landowners, and the public. There are currently 6 Silvicultural Assessment and 6 Accelerated Information Gathering projects planned or underway. For more information of the Forest Service's Applied Research Projects under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, please visit:

http://www.healthyforests.gov/applied_research/index.html

INVASIVE SPECIES AND FOREST HEALTH

The *National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Invasive Species Management* (http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/publications/Invasive_Species.pdf) was released in late fall 2004. This publication identifies strategic direction for all Forest Service Programs relative to invasive species. In FY 2005, Forest Service Forest Health Protection activities include both prevention and suppression efforts and provide resources to restore lands impacted by native and nonnative forest pests. For example, the southern pine beetle, a native insect pest, threatens forests in the Southern United States. The Forest Service, Forest Health Protection program provides $13.8 million to conduct prevention, suppression and restoration activities on 72,000 acres of federal, state and private lands for southern pine beetle. In the Western United States, a complex of various native western bark beetles has caused outbreaks in many States. Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, provides $15.6 million to conduct activities targeting western bark beetles to treat 95,000 acres of federal, state and private lands. Other program funds will be allocated to survey, control or manage various invasive pests; some include: hemlock woolly adelgid, white pine blister rust, gypsy moth, sudden oak death, emerald ash borer, Asian long horned beetle, Mediterranean pine engraver beetle and invasive plants. Around 868,000 acres will be treated as a result of these efforts.



HEALTHY FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES

State, Federal and local partners continue to encourage communities in development and implementation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). Anecdotal reporting from the field indicates a building momentum in accomplishing these plans.

An interagency group is preparing a briefing paper directed at State Foresters, Forest Service Regional Foresters and BLM State Directors, County and City Government officials and local Fire Chiefs emphasizing the need to address the challenges of the wildland urban interface through the use of CWPPs. The briefing paper will suggest specific actions to elevate and accelerate plan development. The Western Governors' Association and the American Forest Resource Council are currently planning collaborative workshops and training sessions aimed at development and preparation of CWPPs. The Western Governors Association is co-sponsoring a three state workshop on Forest Health Collaboration May 19-20 in Casper, WY. Community leaders, state and federal land managers, individual landowners, conservationists and firefighters from the states of Wyoming, Colorado, and South Dakota are invited to attend.

Currently, many States awarding NFP State Fire Assistance Grants for fuel hazard mitigation are utilizing a supporting CWPP as a criterion for selection for funding. More information on how the Healthy Forests Initiative is helping communities, including a link to the "Community Wildfire Protection Plans: How-To Guide" can be found at: www.healthyforests.gov/community.